

PUBLIC

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Fear for Safety

**GUATEMALA** Juan Francisco Almira (m), President of the *Consejo Comunitario de Desarrollo (COCODES) en Microparcelamiento El Naranjo* (Community Council for Development (COCODES) in Microparcelamiento El Naranjo)  
Manuel Antonio Aguita (m), COCODES member

**Killed: Felipe Álvarez (m), COCODES member**

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Felipe Álvarez, a member of a community development organization based in the community of Microparcelamiento El Naranjo in the southern department of Escuintla, was killed on 8 December. In the past two years two other members of the organization have been killed and its members threatened, apparently in relation to the organization's attempts to improve public security in their community. Amnesty International believes the two remaining members of the organization, Juan Francisco Almira and Manuel Antonio Aguita, are at grave risk.

Early on the morning of 8 December, Felipe Álvarez, a member of the *Consejo Comunitario de Desarrollo (Community Council for Development, COCODES)* in the community of Microparcelamiento El Naranjo, left his home in El Naranjo to cycle to the farm where he worked. His body was found by police officers at around 5.45am the same day on a roadside about 10km south of his home on the way to the farm. He had been shot once in the head and three times in the back.

Felipe Alvarez had not received any direct threats prior to his killing, but had claimed that he had been followed on several occasions.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

COCODES are local community structures that support the work of the municipal authorities. They were created by law in 2002 under provisions laid down in the 1996 Peace Accords to strengthen community democracy and participation.

In 2004, the COCODES in Microparcelamiento El Naranjo was instrumental in achieving an agreement to suspend the sale of alcohol in the community after 9pm, in an attempt to reduce the presence of street gangs and lower the level of violence. One bar reportedly refused to comply with the agreement even after a municipal judge ordered it to stop selling alcohol. In November 2004 the owner of the establishment was killed and three police officers wounded during an incident which took place after COCODES members called the police because of disorderly behaviour emanating from the bar. The Public Prosecutor's Office subsequently initiated prosecutions against the three police officers and the five COCODES members. In October 2007 the hearings were suspended after the private prosecutor filed a complaint against the tribunal.

In September 2005, COCODES member Moisés Ajbal was killed by unknown assailants. In September 2006, Juan José Atz, then President of COCODES, was also killed. With the killing of Felipe Álvarez, only two members of COCODES remain alive.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish or your own language:**

- urging the authorities to take immediate and effective measures to guarantee the safety of Juan Francisco Almira and Manuel Antonio Aguita, in accordance with their own wishes;
- urging the authorities to carry out a swift and impartial investigation into the killing of Felipe Álvarez and to bring to justice those found to be responsible;
- reminding the authorities that human rights defenders, including community leaders, have the right to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals, as set out in the UN Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

**APPEALS TO:**

President of the Republic of Guatemala  
Presidente de la República de Guatemala  
Lic. Oscar Berger Perdomo  
Casa Presidencial, 6ª Avenida, 4-18, Zona 1.  
Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

**Fax + 502 2383 8390**

**Email via website: [www.scep.gob.gt/portalscep/index.php?option=com\\_contact&Itemid=3](http://www.scep.gob.gt/portalscep/index.php?option=com_contact&Itemid=3)**

**Salutation: Dear President/Estimado Sr. Presidente**

Minister of the Interior

Ministra de Gobernación  
Adela Camacho de Torrebiarte  
6ª Avenida 13-71, Zona 1,  
Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

**Fax: + 502 2413 8658**

**Salutation: Dear Minister/Estimada Sra. Ministra**

Attorney General and Head of the Public Prosecutor's Office

Fiscal General de la República y Jefe del Ministerio Público  
Lic. Juan Luis Florido  
8ª Avenida 10-67, Zona 1, Antiguo Edificio del Banco de los Trabajadores,  
Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

**Fax + 502 2411 9124**

**+ 502 2411 9326**

**Salutation: Dear Attorney General/Estimado Fiscal General**

**COPIES TO:**

COCODES de Microparcelamiento El Naranjo  
c/o Unidad de Protección de Defensoras y Defensores de Derechos Humanos  
1ª calle 0-11, El Sauce, Zona 2  
Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

**Fax: + 502 2232 2651**

**E-mail: [udefegua@yahoo.com](mailto:udefegua@yahoo.com)**

and to diplomatic representatives of Guatemala accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 22 January 2008.